Mark Hill is using our Care campaign to drive up standards at his trust. He spoke to Adele Waters

A solid base to build on

When Mark Hill first heard of the Care campaign, its aims and values instantly struck a chord with him. ‘I believe the fundamental role of the nurse is to treat patients with compassion, dignity and respect. I was impressed with the campaign’s aims to put patients at the heart of care,’ he says.

So when Chesterfield Royal Hospital NHS Foundation Trust – which is signed up to the Care campaign – advertised a new post for a matron who would be responsible for helping to drive up standards of fundamental care, Mr Hill had no hesitation in applying for the role.

‘The matron post appealed to me because it involved taking on a senior nursing role and required the ability to come up with strategies to improve patient care, while still working with patients and staff in a clinical environment,’ he says.

Mr Hill’s previous nursing experience meant he was well equipped to take on the role. Since qualifying in 2002, he has worked as a staff nurse – mainly in emergency medicine and admission areas.

In addition, he has worked across primary and secondary care as a respiratory nurse specialist, been a ward manager, lectured in respiratory and acute medicine and was employed as a senior matron for respiratory and acute medicine, before being offered the post of senior matron – professional standards, at Chesterfield Royal Hospital NHS Foundation Trust in April.

His new role involves a 50-50 split of duties, which are divided between providing support and advice to clinical staff and working across the organisation to raise standards of nursing practice and improve the quality of care for patients.

He is tasked with driving improvement in patient care and experience, and to ensure that patients receive dignified and compassionate care. This commitment is underpinned by six key aims set by the trust, which have been inspired by the Care campaign, as well as feedback from patients (see box, left). Mr Hill is confident that standards of care will improve as a result.

Knowledgeable staff

Mr Hill will be helped to achieve his ambition by a new drive to improve the education and training of nursing staff, part of the trust’s current 18-month strategy.

With little funding available for training, part of his role will be to look at new and cost-effective ways of teaching, such as using e-learning packages.

His aim is to ensure that all patients – many of whom are older people with long-term conditions caused by working in the mining and steel industry.
industries – are treated by clinicians who are well-educated and knowledgeable.

To that end, he plans to develop a system allowing staff from different specialties to learn and share from the experiences of patients across the trust.

He plans to use this education drive to remind nurses about the importance of providing essential care, beginning with a focus on how best nurses can relieve patients’ pain and boost their nutrition.

‘Our overall aim is to build on successes year-on-year. It is about laying the foundations of care, being realistic and concentrating on the fundamentals, such as education and training. Once that platform is solid, we can keep building on it,’ he says.

Mr Hill feels the positive feedback he has had since taking on his new role will continue to inspire him to deal with the challenges he may face in the future. ‘Patients seem to appreciate me being visible and on the wards. And nurses know that I am always there to offer advice and support, because I understand the challenges they face.’

Mr Hill’s role will see him work in partnership with other organisations, including the voluntary sector, to enhance ongoing patient care. He is also involved in the trust’s efforts to raise its profile in the local community through its communication strategy, to make the public aware of its plans to improve care in the future.

PATIENTS WELCOME REGULAR ROUNDS

Despite only being in post for a few months and facing ambitious targets to improve patient care, Mr Hill has already helped to put in place ‘essential nursing rounding’ throughout the trust, where inpatients are checked regularly, at least every four hours, depending on their needs.

The initiative, being considered by the prime minister’s nursing and care quality forum, also asks nurses to record the care and any interventions they give during rounding.

Mr Hill has been involved with piloting and gathering feedback from patients and staff on the essential nursing rounding initiative. The feedback shows that patients have welcomed the checks, provided they are tailored to their individual requirements.

‘Essential nursing rounding means we can guarantee that particular interventions are right for individual patients, that their needs are being catered for, and that we are being proactive rather than reactive,’ he says.

Mr Hill stresses that to get nurses on board he has tried not to make it feel like an additional task. By talking to nurses about how rounding can improve patient care, and even potentially ease workload, he believes they now see rounding as part of their everyday role.

Although he says it is too early to give accurate information about how this rounding initiative has improved the patient experience, there has been a reduction in the number of pressure ulcers at the trust.